

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND
BUDGET AND FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE
APRIL 20, 2010**

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee of the Wethersfield Town Council held a Budget Meeting on Tuesday, April 20, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the Police Community Room, 250 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Drake, Kotkin, Manousos, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann.

Absent: Councilor Hurley and McAlister

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager; Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, Brian O'Connor, Chief Building Official, Jim McDonald, Assistant Director of Physical Services, Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, Lisa Hancock, Finance Director, and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

LIBRARY

Laurel Goodgion reported on the Library's budget which is broken down into five programs.

1. Loaning Materials which makes up 34% of the total Library budget and accounts for 10.4 FTEs. Loan Materials is the collection services staff responsible for ordering, checking in and shelving the materials. The major changes in that part of the budget are that loans have increased 27% over the past year, which also increases the items returned and shelved.
2. Childhood Education, which accounts for 23% of the budget, is the childrens' services staff and includes the dollars for the childrens' collection. 36% of the people who responded to a survey reported that they came to the Library to use the childrens' area, and the Library had over 1,300 children registered for the Summer Reading Club, and 240 preschool classes last year attended by over 7,000 children and caregivers.
3. Lifelong Learning, which accounts for 26% of the budget, and is the services for adults and teens, contributing to their lifelong learning and support in their daily life questions and answers. Since renovations have been completed, they have been able to have the seventh graders in for orientation visits. They also have an English conversation group for new English speakers which two of the board members, Susan and Kim, were involved with. The department answered over 28,500 reference questions and that program includes all materials purchased for adults and teens.

4. Public computers make up 7% of the budget. Thirty thousand people have used the library computers over the past year. The library also held over 40 introductory computer classes. Forty percent of the survey respondents stated that they visit the library to use the computers. The library also offers a class, "Ask Ken" where people can bring their computer questions in.
5. Town Commons or Wethersfield's Living Room, which is the building itself. The building underlies all the programs that the library offers and this represents 10% of the budget. Thirty-one percent of the survey respondents indicate that they use the library to visit a comfortable place, to read the newspapers, to read, use the meeting and study rooms. The Library now has nine meeting and study rooms that were used 1,900 times in the past year by over 10,000 people.

Laurel Goodgion noted that when they put the program budget together, one-fifth of the administrative staff was attributed to each of these programs.

Councilor Drake inquired about the line item for computers.

Laurel Goodgion responded that computers would be under IT equipment but that there wasn't any money for computers this year. She stated that they did purchase computers this year out of last year's budget and is hopeful that they are able to purchase a few more computers this year if funds remain in this year's budget.

Councilor Manousos asked how many computers are in this year's budget.

Laurel Goodgion responded that the Library has 50 computers.

Councilor Manousos asked if there was a capital expense for the RFID.

Laurel Goodgion responded that was correct and that \$25,000 is the current recommendation for RFID project and is located in the CIP budget. She stated that the total cost of that project is approximately \$150,000 and the \$25,000 would get the project started.

Councilor Manousos asked how the Town's Library hours of operation were compared to neighboring towns.

Laurel Goodgion stated that the Town's Library hours are similar but that the variances are that Wethersfield is closed on Wednesday evenings while other libraries are open. She also added that she drafted a chart which she will distribute to anyone who would like a copy which reflects the library hours for the surrounding areas: Glastonbury is open 64 hours; Newington is open 62 hours; Rocky Hill is open 58 hours; West Hartford is open 63 hours and Wethersfield is open 61 hours.

Councilor Manousos asked if there should be a consideration to expand, reduce or keep the same hours.

Laurel Goodgion stated that it is difficult to compare Wethersfield's library to other towns because the statistics that she turned into the State Library reflect only half the year since the completion of the renovations.

Councilor Drake asked if there is a possibility to expand hours with reduced services or even gate off the children's section of the Library.

Laurel Goodgion responded that it wouldn't reduce staffing that much and there isn't a way to shut off the upstairs from the downstairs levels. She also stated that evening hours are important to families, programs are held in the evenings and the library is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays until 9:00p.m.

Jeff Bridges asked what the cost would be per hour to open additional hours.

Laurel Goodgion responded that it would be approximately \$500 to be open for four hours on Sundays. Her recommendation would be to increase the Sunday hours. At this time the library is open on Sundays eight months of the year and four additional months would be an additional 20 Sundays for a total of \$5,000 to be open all year round. It does not include utilities which are continuously running. She added also that if the Library was to be open on Wednesdays, it would add an additional 52 days.

Councilor Drake asked how a partial service could be provided for a similar cost.

Councilor Roberts asked if surrounding libraries are open year-round on Sundays.

Laurel Goodgion responded that at this point they are not. Wethersfield's library is closed on Sundays from June through September.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the .46 reduction in FTE's for library associates.

Laurel Goodgion responded that in order to bring the budget in at 0%, children's services were reduced by 15 hours a week.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about the 3% increase in the budget.

Laurel Goodgion stated that it is not over the projected cost for this year. When the budget was put together, it was unknown at the time about the increase in the pension and it wasn't known about the increase in custodial costs. She added that the projected costs for this year's budget is higher than appropriated because when the budget was approved last year, the union contract had not been settled so funds did not show in that budget for salary.

increases. She also stated that there was a variance in the cost of health insurance and the cost of health insurance was higher than what was estimated at the budget.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the 25% increase in the health insurance and asked if it was compounded by the revision from 2009-2010 which had not been captured together with this year's increase.

Laurel Goodgion responded that a difference in the health insurance increase was that even though the union made large concessions in health insurance and increased their portion that they paid for health insurance, there were a few increases. One increase was when one staff member had left who had waived health benefits and a new staff member was hired who took the health benefits and she believed it was worth \$7,000 to \$7,500. Also, as part of the union contract before the amount of money that the Town gave to an employee who waived health insurance changed and it increased from \$1,000 for single coverage to \$2,000 and for two member coverage it increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000.

Councilor Kotkin stated that he had thought that the health care costs were going down because of the re-opener.

Laurel Goodgion responded that the contract was signed in July and the salaries were retroactive to July 1 of this current budget year.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the health care savings were in 2009-2010 versus 2008-2009, not in 2010-2011 versus 2009-2010.

Laurel Goodgion stated that she felt the health care savings would be in this current year as opposed to last year, and there were also increases in the waiver coverage and the previous staff member who waived health insurance and the new staff member who chose to use it. Also, the union waived health benefits for future employees when they retired and that will be a long term savings to the Town.

Jeff Bridges stated that the current budget does not include salary increases, and in this line item. Those were put in a different line item because the contract was not settled. If the numbers are added in, it will be close to the 2008-2009 actual budget.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the salary increases were not accounted for.

Jeff Bridges responded that they were not in this current year.

Councilor Montinieri asked if health care was included.

Lisa Hancock responded that it is not showing in this year's budget.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the \$147,612 which is the number for 2009-2010 is an accurate number.

Laurel Goodgion stated that the corrected projection for this year is \$168,956 for health insurance.

Councilor Montinieri asked if this would be a revised real number.

Laurel Goodgion responded that yes, it would be.

Councilor Montinieri asked when the Town was negotiating healthcare for the Library, he thought concessions were made. He stated that he saw a total 25% increase and if \$7,500 is taken out, that would bring it down to 20% increase and if 12% is from last year, that leaves 8% this year. He stated that he was also trying to understand how the Town wide increase on health insurance is 8.2% and that when they went into contract negotiations and heard about the Library's efforts, there were concessions made that would have suggested that the Library had made progress.

Laurel Goodgion stated that she felt the increase for next year is about 8.5% over the projected costs for this year which are higher than originally estimated.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the \$30,000 increase with the employee insurance coverage and how much of it is pension.

Laurel Goodgion responded that the pension also went up.

Lisa Hancock added that the pension is in a different account.

Councilor Manousos stated that it is not broken up.

Councilor Kotkin questioned the increase in the employee insurance coverage from \$130,000 to \$160,000 and asked how much of that the pension was.

Lisa Hancock responded that the pension is almost \$41,000 last year and \$65,000.

Councilor Kotkin asked Laurel Goodgion asked where she expects to end this fiscal year.

Laurel Goodgion responded there will be some funds left over due to the difference in the custodial costs because when the budget was appropriated, they had a different custodial service and she hoped to use that to purchase some computers and some other things.

Councilor Kotkin inquired how much would be left over.

Laurel Goodgion responded \$30,000.

Jeff Bridges stated that in the current year budget some items were left out and the current year budget purchased with prior year bonds during that budget year.

Councilor Kotkin asked how the Library budget is affected by using money out of the Town's healthcare reserve or reducing healthcare increases.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town is charging it against the retiree fund because we would have to transfer money into that anyways. The Library is grouped in with the town's side of the house, and it is not benefiting one particular department, it is just reducing retiree contributions.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the reduction from 8.4% to 8.0% in healthcare costs.

Jeff Bridges responded that they are working on it now. He said that they were informed by Chris Monroe today that he and Anthem both agreed on a 6.1% renewal.

Lisa Hancock stated that at this time it looks like the library's health insurance is going down to \$178,408 from \$181,972.

Councilor Kotkin stated that it is a \$3,000 reduction.

Councilor Drake asked what the actual number on the current 2009-2010 budget.

Councilor Manousos asked Laurel Goodgion if she is expecting her surplus to be off of the \$1,646,000.

Laurel Goodgion responded yes and added that the two items she did cut out of the budget, she was hoping to purchase with the remaining funds. That would be the remote support for their computers, which is approximately \$8,300 and purchasing a block of hours for text support.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the custodial services.

Laurel Goodgion stated that the Town had gone out to bid for a new custodial contract and the low bidder's bid was \$26,100 for this current year. When the budget was put together, they thought that was the figure they were dealing with but then it went up 3%.

Deputy Mayor Console asked how the custodial staff was doing.

Laurel Goodgion responded that they were doing alright but that they are not as good as the previous custodial staff.

Councilor Kotkin asked if there was \$3,500 for healthcare.

Jeff Bridges responded yes.

BUILDING

Brian O'Connor, Chief Building Official, gave an overview of the Department. He stated that they enforce State mandated statutes, codes, Town regulations, Town ordinances, building inspections, enforce zoning regulations, property maintenance code, historic district regulations, motor vehicle ordinance, sign ordinance, the liaison to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic District Commission, Building Board of Appeals, ADA Coordinator for Municipal Buildings, and to provide technical assistance to other Town departments. He stated that all the inspectors share the responsibilities listed above but himself, his assistant and his part-time inspector do the majority of the building inspections. He stated that the volume of permits in Wethersfield is still the same.

Jeff Bridges stated that the big difference is that the part-time property maintenance inspector position has been eliminated and those responsibilities will roll into an existing full-time position of the sidewalk inspector. He also stated that the hours for the part-time secretary have been increased with the roll out of the new building permit computer software. More hours were needed by the staff to become familiar with the system.

Councilor Manousos asked if the people who go from .41 and .32 to .5 are still considered part-time with no benefits.

Jeff Bridges stated yes because it comes to 19.5 hours.

Councilor Drake stated that the budget is up 7.5 % this year and what are the plans for next year.

Brian O'Connor noted that he had requested the part-time position about six or seven years ago due to the volume of work. Last year when he had to come in with a 0% budget he had to cut the part-timers which has hurt the department and now he is asking for a part-timer back. When the new computer system is running, there may be less activity at the counter.

RaeAnn Palmer also noted that when violation notices are given to people, letters need to be drafted giving the property owner a certain amount of time to comply. There is a paper trail that needs to be followed. It is very labor intensive.

Councilor Manousos asked what Brian O'Connor thought his biggest challenges will be in operations next year.

Brian O'Connor stated that he is always looking for ways to save money or make additional money. Last year, they implemented a cost valuation schedule which was put into effect on July 1, 2009. This did not raise permit fees but a number was put on the cost of work/square footage and a cost valuation was done. The Town of Newington uses this also. He noted that John Lepper had done a very good job but did not have enough hours. The Building Department will still be involved with the motor vehicle ordinances, sign ordinances, and zoning enforcement.

Councilor Kotkin asked what went into the revenue estimate of \$249,900 for next year.

Brian O'Connor stated that they never know because of the economy so they try to play it safe.

Lisa Hancock stated that she had spoken with Tony Martino about the \$249,900 and he stated that there hadn't been a lot of increases as far as future building enhancements but he also thought it was going to remain somewhat stable so he didn't feel the need to reduce it, but he also was not showing that there was a need to increase it as well based on what's happening out there.

Brian O'Connor stated that during the last two months there has been a lot of things coming in and he hoped that it continues, but there has also been slow months.

Councilor Kotkin commented that he wanted to see how the analyst came up with that number and felt it was too low based on what the Town Planner has said.

Jeff Bridges commented that the numbers and the economy were looked at to get to this number. He added that until a permit is pulled, nothing can be predicted. Most permits are for residential modifications so there is a history of a general number of ongoing residential rehabilitation so that is what the number is based on and what is generally done in an economy such as what the Town is in right now.

Councilor Kotkin commented that he just wants to know how this number was arrived at.

PHYSICAL SERVICES

Jeff Bridges stated that Analyst for the Physical Services is not here this evening. If there are any questions, she will need to be brought back

Assistant Director of Physical Services Jim McDonald reported that this Department is responsible for plowing snow, marking fields, picking up leaves, and cutting grass.

Jeff Bridges noted that for the Physical Services Department, the 1303-40 employees are taking a hard zero and the Town is going to cover some increases in their health insurance, but generally speaking there is not any general wage increase or step for the 31 employees in the union. He also noted that was not in this year's budget but has been restored with monies from the savings in the janitorial contract, \$11,000 was put back in for part-time leaf collection. Physical Services also takes care of the exterior of the school buildings.

Jim McDonald added that Physical Services does work on the schools' exterior lights and parking hall lots but the schools have their own electricians. They also plow the snow, mow the grass, and mark the fields.

Chairperson Hemmann asked Jim McDonald what would or could he do differently.

Jim McDonald stated changes have been made at Physical Services. His mechanics did not have a Fleet Supervisor for the past three years and it has worked out well. The Department has also gone to Zero Turn motors rather than buying the Turos. The Zero Turn motors are quicker and cut grass faster and this has helped to increase productivity.

Councilor Drake asked why the natural gas bill decreased so much.

Jim McDonald stated that although he doesn't know how it would have affected the natural gas costs, the old garage had a different system which they were able to eliminate and put more efficient small heaters. He noted that it also hadn't been a very cold winter and gas prices have gone down.

Councilor Montinieri asked for clarification on the unleaded fuel.

Jeff Bridges noted that the Town's total fuels went up 25% in both unleaded and diesel and that the contract for the unleaded gas expires in June.

Councilor Montinieri asked if all the town vehicles get their gas through Physical Services.

Jim McDonald responded that all town vehicles do go through Physical Services, including Board of Education and the Police Department and that all of the bigger trucks are diesel.

Councilor Montinieri questioned why line items are not done by department in order to track that.

Lisa Hancock responded that at one time it was consolidated.

Jim McDonald noted that there is a computer system that tracks gas consumption. The individual will have a number that is punched into the computer system that asks for mileage and it records the gas. Jim McDonald says that he is able to print out a report for each separate vehicle. This report is also used to track when police vehicles need maintenance/oil changes.

Councilor Manousos asked how far back does the system go and asked if a report can be generated.

Jim McDonald stated that a report can be run by department use.

Councilor Drake asked what the difference is for in total building facilities, from \$697,701 vs. \$1,022,569.

Jim McDonald noted that there wasn't anything in building facilities and maintenance.

Jeff Bridges added that there is no current year number for salaries.

RaeAnn Palmer commented that all the information was put together in one spreadsheet towards the end of the process.

Councilor Kotkin asked who the Town receives the most revenue from for tree services.

Lisa Hancock responded that it was Newington, about \$28,000.

Jim McDonald added that Newington pays a set rate of \$28,000 and a crew goes over and works off of it. The terms have not been negotiated for awhile and suggested that maybe it's time to do that.

Lisa Hancock also noted that the minimum is \$28,000 but it could be more depending upon usage.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the status of the speed light.

Jim Bridges responded that they have received a list from CL&P but there is no way to put that on a map so the GIS person is mapping where the lights are and once those lights have been identified, CL&P can be informed as to which lights can be turned off.

Councilor Montinieri noted that the budget calls for a flat street light budget.

Jeff Bridges responded that the reduction was taken out of this year's budget.

Councilor Drake asked if the Town was in a position for LEDs.

Jim McDonald responded not at this time.

Jeff Bridges noted that when the electric numbers were reviewed, the savings were taken in the current year for the all the electricity town-wide, so the reduction is already realized in the current budget so next year it won't be seen.

Councilor Kotkin noted that between the current CL&P rate change and what the legislature may or may not plan, it could be a big drop but it could be zero but there is no way to budget for a lower delivery charge.

Jeff Bridges added that if it were settled they would renew it and take it.

CNEF

Jeff Bridges explained that the CNEF includes requests for all the departments for rolling stock in certain equipment items. He noted that the manager's recommendation is for the four police patrol vehicles, the replacement of their four Expedition SUVs, \$55,000 which is money set aside for the next reevaluation, a new tax assessment and tax collection software to replace the existing MUNIS software. In Physical Services, it is recommended to buy the last Leaf Vac machine and replace five pick-ups, the Fire Marshal's Ford Explorer and thermal camera. The pagers for the Fire Department will be paid for out of the radio reserve. He also added that the rolling stock that includes the patrol vehicles, the Ford Expedition SUV for the police, the equipment for Physical Services, he is proposing to use a three year lease purchase agreement for the rolling stock. The total value of the

rolling stock purchase is \$366,000 and using a three year lease reduces by one third and that is how they are proposing to fund the budget. He also noted that with regards to the non-lease items, the reevaluation money, the tax software and the thermal camera, an analysis was done and there is approximately \$50,000 in the CNEF funds from the prior year sale of surplus equipment that is being applied to next year's budget and is reflected in the budget. Jeff Bridges noted that even as other items are coming off lease, the total lease cost for next year will be lower next year than this year because we have step coming off. Jeff Bridges also noted that there was some concern in the Budget and Finance Committee meeting about Physical Services. Jim McDonald drafted a projection of replacement vehicle needs over the next several years.

Councilor Montinieri asked if these are the best situations for leases and values right now with the economy down in terms of buying/leasing vehicles.

Jeff Bridges responded that there are lower interest rates on the leases, and the vehicles are being sold close to cost, especially the heavier equipment.

Councilor Montinieri asked if it would make sense to look at Jim McDonald's report going out and look at some opportunities to purchase at a lower rate now as opposed to when they would be needed, they will be more expensive.

Jeff Bridges responded that there would be a trade interest rate for dollar cost of the product. He noted that in a municipal lease purchase, there is no residual and also noted that the goal is to keep the fleet replacement current.

Jim McDonald noted that what he is looking for is to replace the pickups.

Councilor Roberts inquired about the 1980 pickup.

Jim McDonald responded that it was a donation from the Fire Department with only 30,000 miles.

Councilor Manousos asked what percentage of the time were the vans used by the painters or electricians.

Jim McDonald responded that the vans are used every day.

Chairperson Hemmann asked about the life span of the tractor.

Jim McDonald responded that there is a Ford and a John Deere, and hoping to get 15 to 20 years out of them.

Councilor Roberts inquired about the software for the tax office.

Lisa Hancock responded that the MUNIS product is for the financial system is fine.

Councilor Manousos asked Jim McDonald about shared services and how he saw the operation being able to handle additional work coming from the Board.

Jeff Bridges noted the issue may possibly be custodial and management.

Lisa Hancock explained that the manufacturer of the program MUNIS has made some enhancements but it is not working as efficiently as staff needs it.

Councilor Montinieri asked what was put aside last year for the project.

Lisa Hancock responded that no money was put into it.

Councilor Roberts noted that the bigger policy issue is that presentations have been made on something that is going to help, MUNIS, the 800 Radio, 800 megahertz, and then a few years later it is a total disaster and it costs the Town millions to either fix or rehab it.

Jeff Bridges commented on the 800 megahertz radio system, that there was no one on staff at the Town that understood radios and a consultant was hired. He noted that his goal is to have people on town staff that understands radio. Jeff Bridges stated that MUNIS biggest problem is that they do not understand how tax collectors and tax assessors in Connecticut work.

Lisa Hancock added that there is one year left on the provider payments with MUNIS to use the software and they will let us out of it if we decide that's what we want. MUNIS has given the Town a significant amount of funds and additional software that is being used internally and that was not paid for which totaled about \$30,000-\$35,000 worth of money that they gave back to the Town.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the new tax software for \$15,000 and the other is revaluation for \$55,000. He asked if MUNIS were to come back for another presentation, what would they tell us now.

Lisa Hancock replied that MUNIS would say that enhancements have been made, rolling it out in sequential order, not everything has been put into place at once. MUNIS still states that they are committed to trying to make this work. The problem is, is that it is not working.

Councilor Manousos asked how the system is being paid for.

Lisa Hancock responded that the Town is on an Application Service Provider contract and it is part of that contract, so that the software is housed on their servers in Maine and they handle disaster recovery, the back up and the hardware updates.

Councilor Kotkin asked if \$55,000/year for four years.

Lisa Hancock responded that that is for revaluation, and has nothing to do with software. Funds are set aside each year for the next statistical revaluation and the \$15,000 is just for the software for the first year.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about the \$250,000 quote from Chandler Rose.

Lisa Hancock responded that this is to be paid for over a series of years.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about the \$91,000 amount.

Lisa Hancock responded that is the total cost of the software package. During each year there will also be maintenance fees associated with it.

Councilor Kotkin asked if a summary could be put together as to what is being asked for.

Jeff Bridges responded that they are asking for \$15,000 in the CNEF budget so options can be explored on the tax collector/tax assessor package.

Councilor Kotkin asked if we would be acquiring a new package.

Jeff Bridges responded that there is a vendor and they are going to ask for bid waivers.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the purchase would be budgeted in the next fiscal year.

Jeff Bridges responded that it would be description type issue and it would be paid annually for maintenance and a portion of the purchase for seven years.

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Peter Gillespie reported that the Planning and Economic Development is summarized into five functional area of their department are: tourism function; the planning and zoning and the permitting function in terms of how they work with the Building Department and some of the other permit agencies; administration of grants; economic development and redevelopment agency. In terms of the program areas of the department, the Tourism Commission primarily is set up to promote the historic Wethersfield product; the Economic Development function has a business recruitment program, business retention program and they also administer a number of business incentive programs, façade program, tax incentive program and business assistance program working with local businesses to identify problems and help solve. They also administer grants in partnership with other departments, primarily the STEAP grants. The Planning and Zoning function is to staff the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Designer of Youth Commission, and there is also the Redevelopment function.

Councilor Manousos asked about the capital improvement portion of the budget, façade improvement in which \$25,000 is being budgeted and the local bond issue redevelopment which is budgeted for \$5 million.

Peter Gillespie responded that the funding for the Façade Program primarily through state funding for approximately \$400,000 and at one point five years \$40,000 was put into it by the Town, but it has been a state funded initiative. It is running out of money and there are two pending projects and if they are funded fully they will run out of money by July 1. Supplemental funding was asked for and he understands that there is \$25,000 in CIP to fund that. \$25,000 will fund a partial of one project. Peter Gillespie reported that in terms of the bonding for redevelopment, depending upon how it is set up, they could tap into that for some of the other supplemental incentive programs. The Façade Improvement program has funded approximately 15 different projects to date.

Councilor Roberts asked who is responsible for trimming back the trees near the Wethersfield town sign off of Exit 25 from Highway 91.

Jeff Bridges responded that John, Brian or Mike have met with the people from the cemetery about that issue.

Peter Gillespie added that they are pursuing through different avenues the new design for the signage issue that includes new gateway signs, and will tap into state funding and federal funding. The Town is obligated to put in a required match also.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about the level of activity that is coming into his office.

Peter Gillespie responded that for the last six months, they have had a number of small business starts but otherwise it has been relatively quiet. They are having conversations with people about the Fun Zone, Comstock Ferre and some of the larger buildings in town.

Councilor Kotkin asked about Ridge Road housing with HUD.

Peter Gillespie responded he has had several meetings set up to see what can be done to assist HUD but that the meetings were cancelled.

Chairperson Hemmann asked what he could do or would do differently.

Peter Gillespie said that what they would like to do but don't do is to promote the town through the website, in the area of public relations and telling a better story about the community. It is done through the Tourism side but not necessarily on the economic side. They are also trying to pull together a database of developers, commercial brokers beyond the immediate area to try to generate additional interests. He also feels that the shops' local programs would help them with developing a better relationship with the business community in Town. He noted that the Chamber of Commerce does not tap into a greater percentage of the business community so there is a gap there.

Chairperson Hemmann asked what it would take to do that.

Peter Gillespie responded that Shops Local is bringing new faces to the table that have not been seen before.

Jeff Bridges noted that the Chamber of Commerce is having difficulty proving value in the membership because there are so many other ways to communicate.

Chris Lyon added that one successful project that was funded in the past was the Farmers' Market which is now self sustaining now.

Councilor Montinieri commented that Planning and Zoning has taken hits publicly with the Aforismo property and the Comstock Ferre property that are framing outside of the Town's domain. He feels that at the local level continues to be positive among the friends of the Town but that he is concerned about the Aforismo and Comstock Ferre issues because publicly it has done a lot of damage.

Peter Gillespie also noted that council needs to play an active role setting the tone and having the tone carry down to the Planning and Zoning level. The Economic Development Commission also shares that concern also.

Chris Traczyk, Tourism, noted that there has been discussion on the state level about bringing organizations in to do training for Planning and Zoning boards, and how it should function in making decisions. It was suggested that the Town may want to look at it in terms of where that's going to be done through Home Connecticut which is the consortium of municipalities and legislators and other organizations. She added that it is an issue that comes up in other communities, and it may be a solution.

Councilor Manousos asked if the Council gets to direct the regulations or if Planning and Zoning does it.

Jeff Bridges responded that in order to revitalize a lot of these properties, the town is going to have to find situations and conditions that are not what was done yesterday. Convincing people we are going to be doing something different is tough.

Councilor Montinieri commented that it is a modest budget. All of their work gets vastly diminished when there is a philosophical disconnect between the intent of politicians and the people specifically on Planning and Zoning.

Councilor Roberts asked about the plan on Conservation and Development for \$75,000, and if it needed to be done every 10 years.

Peter Gillespie responded that it does need to be done every ten years and they are at that point now.

Councilor Roberts asked if a consultant will be hired.

Peter Gillespie responded that the statute requires that it be reviewed and updated where appropriate. The statistics will be reviewed and a decision will be made as to what needs to be updated.

Councilor Roberts asked if \$75,000 was a real number.

Peter Gillespie responded that he does not have \$75,000. He does have three or four firms in Connecticut and they will put it out to bid and get a proposal. They have already put together the RFP. He stated that they will work closely with whoever they retain to direct that and let them do the sign.

Chris Lyons thanked the Board for the \$25,000 but if extra money is found for the façade program, there will be applicants for that money.

Lisa Hancock handed out a spreadsheet on vehicles that Councilor Montinieri had talked about at the last meeting.

Jeff Bridges commented that it justifies the 370 number and how the numbers are chosen.

Per Councilor Robert's request, Jeff Bridges circulated a handout regarding information Bob Young had spoken about regarding expenses at the end of last fiscal year and how dollars had been encumbered.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:25 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Deputy Mayor Console. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores Sassano
Town Clerk

*Approved by vote of Council
May 17, 2010*